

Talking with teens: Techniques for building rapport with adolescents in virtual qualitative interviews

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Background and objective

> As technology progresses and after the COVID-19 pandemic, qualitative interviews are increasingly being conducted virtually or by telephone.

- Evidence suggests that there is little to no difference in either the quality of data collected through virtual interviews compared to in-person interviews or participants' ability to participate.^{1,2}

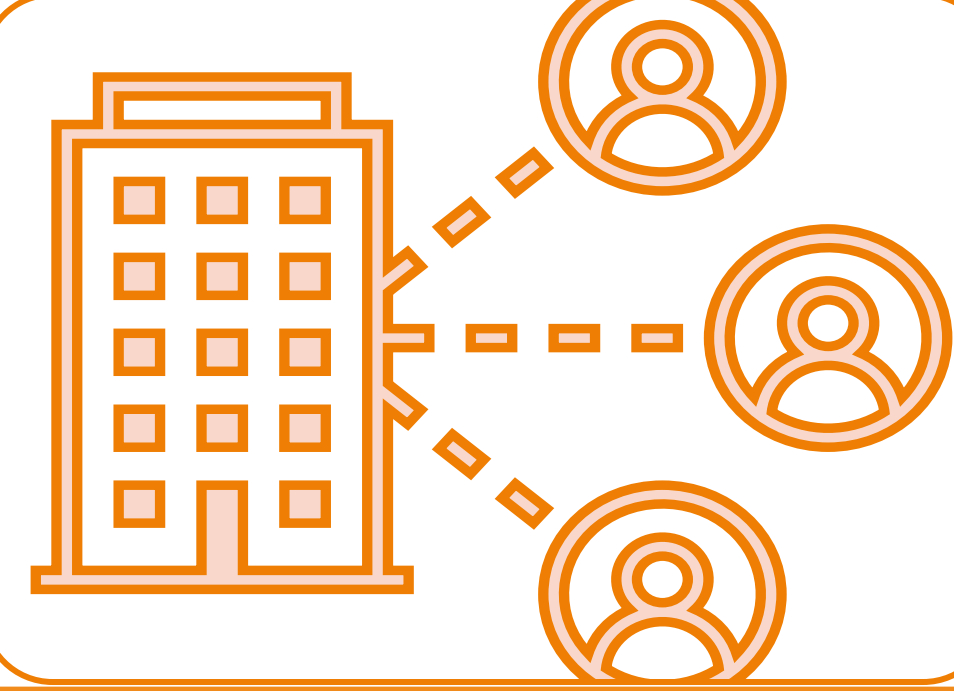
> Rapport-building techniques should be adapted according to the target population.

> Rapport building with adolescent participants (ages 12–17) is a key component of successful qualitative interviewing. However, rapport-building techniques specific to adolescents have not been clearly defined in the literature.

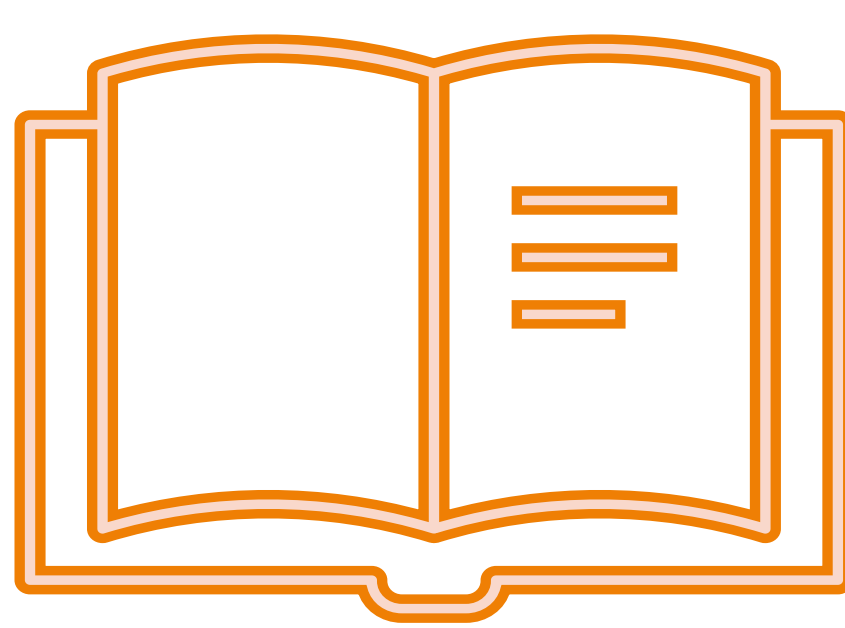
> The objective of this work was to describe methods for building rapport with adolescent participants during virtual qualitative interviews through:

- Identification of rapport-building techniques among researchers; and
- A review of supplemental literature.

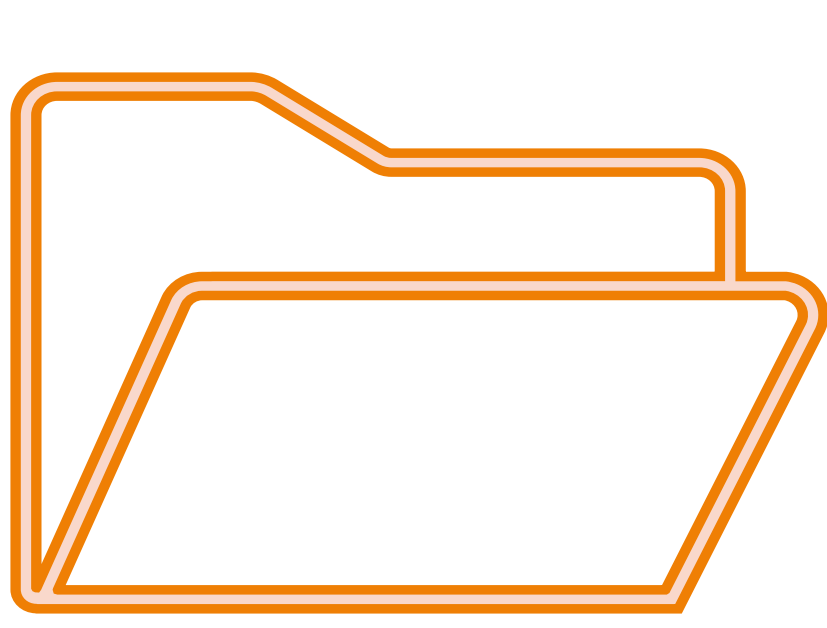
Methods



Identification of techniques used during virtual interviews with adolescents through discussions with trained researchers who have at least one year of experience interviewing adolescents.



A supplemental literature search was conducted in March 2023 via Google Scholar and PubMed to identify rapport-building techniques with adolescents during virtual interviews.



Rapport-building techniques identified from researchers and the supplemental literature search were organized by domain and frequency of report.

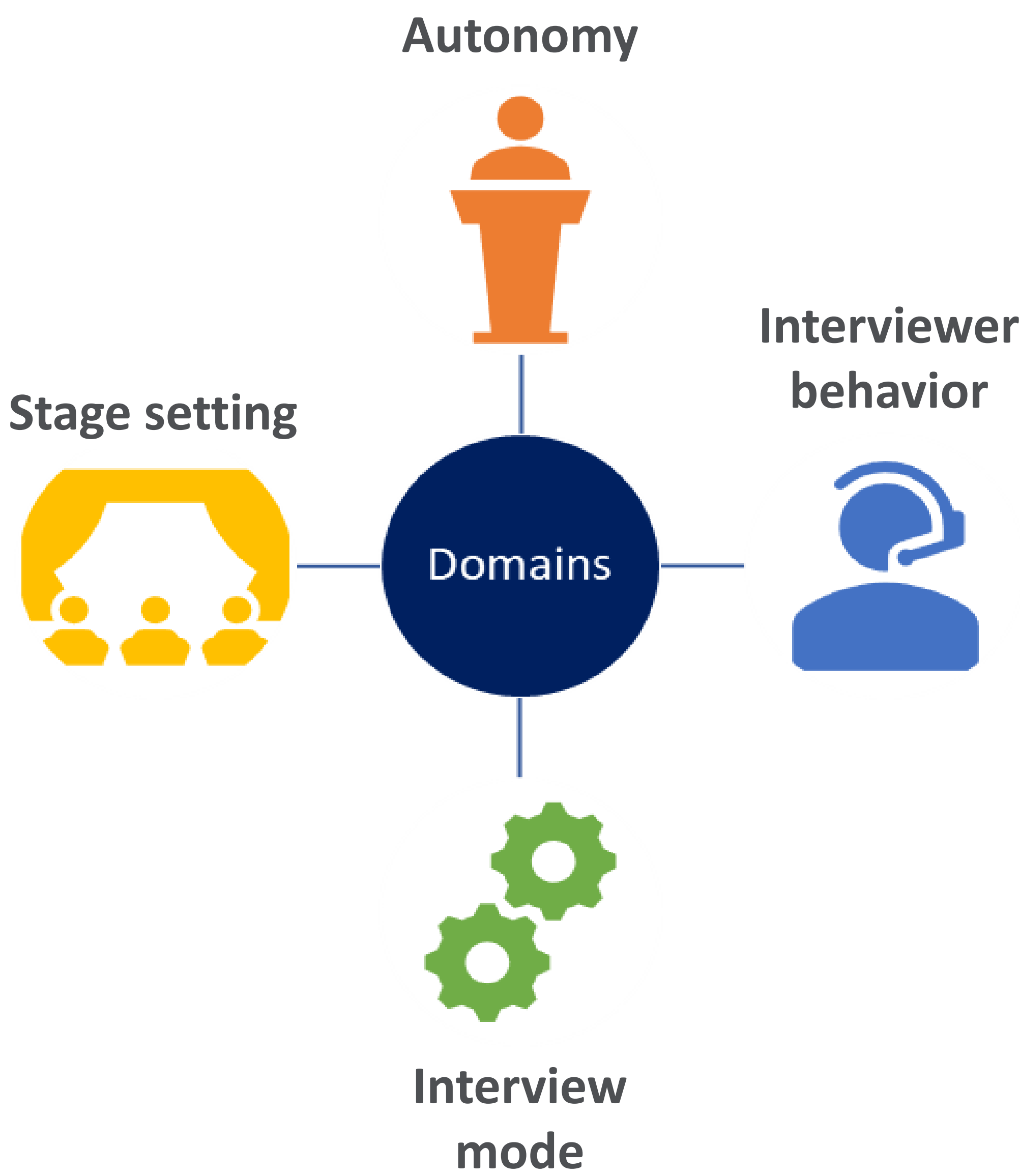
Results

> Thirteen rapport-building techniques across four key domains were identified from the discussions with researchers (N=11 researchers) and the literature (N=5 articles) (see Figure 1 below).

> Techniques identified among researchers and in the supplemental literature were consistent across both reviews.

> The most frequently identified technique was to expect adolescent participants will understand interview questions at a similar level as adults (e.g., they are aware of and dislike being “talked down to”), which was categorized in the autonomy domain.

Figure 1. Key rapport-building techniques for adolescents in interviews



Key takeaways/conclusion

> As virtual interviews become more common, techniques are needed to help interviewers specifically establish and maintain rapport with adolescents when conducting interviews virtually.

> Building rapport with adolescents in their most familiar mode of communication (e.g., technology) can reduce a potential power imbalance and increase the quality of collected data.

> One limitation of this research is the broad age range of adolescence. Not all literature identified in the supplemental search specified the age range, while the researchers defined “adolescence” as between the ages of 12 and 17.

> Stakeholders planning to conduct interviews with adolescent participants should consider conducting the interviews virtually using the techniques identified in the four domains from this research: autonomy, interviewer behavior, interview mode, and stage setting.

Table 1. Summary of domains and techniques identified by researchers and in the literature		
Domain	Domain description	Technique (frequency of report)
 Autonomy	Treat adolescent participants with the same independence one would give to an adult	Expect adolescent participants will understand questions in the interview at a similar level as adults (n=6) [‡]
		Allow adolescent participants to select the time, date, and location of the interview (n=2) ^{*,3}
		Give adolescent participants the choice of having the camera on or off during the interview (n=1) ^{‡,4}
 Interviewer behavior	Actions and attitudes of interviewers during interviews with adolescents to facilitate engagement	Interviewers should be less formal/more friendly during interviews with adolescent participants (n=5) ^{*,3}
		Interviewers should lean into adolescent participants' interests for discussion or if examples are needed during the interviews (n=4) ^{*,3}
		Interviewers should provide encouragement by describing importance of adolescent participants' feedback (n=4) ^{*,3,5}
		Interviewers should provide time for adolescent participant to answer interview questions and probes (n=2) [‡]
		Interviewers should use more probes and follow-up questions during the interviews compared to adults (n=2) [‡]
		Interviewers should use an interview guide and take notes appropriately (n=2) ^{*,1}
 Interview mode	The platform and settings in which the interview was conducted with adolescents	Adolescents are more likely to have familiarity with technology (n=1) ^{‡,1,6}
		Conducting interviews on-camera to better relate with adolescents (n=1) ^{‡,1}
		Use of virtual setting to increase access to vulnerable adolescent populations (n=1) ^{‡,1}
 Stage setting	Creating an environment that facilitates communication and engagement with adolescents	Orienting adolescent participants to purpose of interview (n=5) ^{*,1,3}
*Identified in the literature and trained researchers		
†Identified in the literature only		
‡Identified by trained researchers only		

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